

Visa Stamp vs. Visa Status

The word “**visa**” has been overused. We commonly hear the word generically being used as such:

“Is my **visa** valid?”

“I need to extend my **visa**.”

“This student/scholar is on a **visa**.”

“Does this person have a **visa**.”

Immigration law makes a clear distinction between “**visa stamp**” and “**visa status**”.

When a student or scholar has received an I-20 (F) or DS-2019 (J) they go to a US Embassy or Consulate to apply for a **visa stamp**. The **visa stamp** functions like a key to enter the USA on a particular **visa** category (in this case F-1, F-2, J-1, or J-2). The stamp specifies the date

(expiration date) up until which the foreign national can enter the USA on that particular **visa** category, if they have the proper documents to accompany.

Upon entry into the USA, the foreign visitor completes the I-94, on which the **visa status** is written, as well as the expiration date of the **visa status**. In the case of F and J categories, the end date should be “D/S”, which stands for “Duration of Status”. (Note: If your F or J status is not “D/S”, you

need to speak with an international advisor as soon as possible.)

Your D/S or your I-94 date is valid up until the end date on your I-20 or DS-2019. You should never let this date expire under any circumstances, or you will lose your valid **visa status**. You need to speak with an international advisor for an extension of program, if the need arises.



If you leave the country when: 1) your **visa status** says “D/S”, 2) your I-20 or DS-2019 has not expired, and 3) the **visa stamp** in your passport has not expired, you may re-enter on the valid **visa stamp**. If the **visa stamp** has expired, you’ll

need to go to the US Embassy or Consulate to apply for a new **visa** (entry) **stamp**. (Note: Do not forget to have your form signed before you travel. The signature is valid for 6 months.)

When one is physically outside of the USA, they no longer have a **visa status**, as they return the I-94 to immigration upon exiting the country. A new **visa status** is regained (with a new I-94) upon re-entering the USA.

Rice Administration Responds to Visa Concerns

The Rice Administration has responded in several proactive ways to assist the Rice international population in the unique challenges international students and scholars have faced in recent months. Some examples are:

1) **Dr. Jordan Konisky**, *Vice Provost for Research & Graduate Studies*, assisting all faculty on visa delays concerns, and instructing them on avenues for achieving the best possible outcome for their invited internationals.

2) **Dr. Eugene Levy**, *Provost*, working through high level professional associations to inform proper government authorities of effects of visa delays and denials on US universities.

3) **Dr. Mark Scheid**, *President’s Office*, requesting Rice offices to give summer jobs to international students who could not return to their home countries due to visa delay concerns and SARS.

4) **Dr. Adria Baker** works with a professional association for international educators on various advocacy efforts, including attending Congressional Education Day in Washington D.C. and speaking to congressional representatives on Capitol Hill about the concerns of visa delays and balancing national security with the importance of international student and scholar exchange.

SEVIS UPDATE

SEVIS stands for Student & Exchange Visitor Information System. It is an electronic system that tracks all international students and scholars on F and J visas in the USA, that may be accessed by the FBI, CIA, and the Department of Homeland Security. Every U.S. institution that accepts foreign students and scholars must report the required information to SEVIS regarding its students and scholars in order to remain compliant. (continued on pg. 3)

A Letter From the Director:

Dear International Students & Scholars,

You are among a very special group that Rice treasures. In the past several months the USA has gone through very severe changes, whereby national security laws have mandated universities and colleges to conduct intense reporting on the international student and scholars they host (via SEVIS). Our foreign visitors are also required to take on much more responsibility for their immigration status.

In spite of the many new laws, Rice university administrators have found that there has been a greater appreciation for what our internationals bring to us. Following laws of human nature and history, oftentimes one may only discover the value of something when they feel they may lose it.

Such has been the case with foreign visitors at Rice. Due to the greater challenges facing international students and scholars in the USA, in the past months universities and colleges have reviewed the benefits of international education exchange. Rice's response has been to invest thousands of dollars, and multiple employees' hours in an effort to keep and grow the foreign national population while complying with federal mandates imposed on the schools.

We, at the OISS, will be sure that Rice will stay abreast of the compliance laws affecting you. As history has proven over and again, from difficult times one has unique opportunities to reflect on priorities and identify treasured values.

We are so happy to have you here with us at Rice. Please remember the OISS is an office just for you. Appointments to speak with advisors are encouraged. Have a great semester!

Respectfully,



Adria L. Baker, *Director*
Office of International Students & Scholars

RICE WORLD

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INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK



More now than ever, US International Education Week (IEW) is a necessity! Although most people at Rice recognize the assets that international students and scholars bring to the USA, IEW a great time to be reminded of how our school, city, country, and culture is enriched by foreign visitors.

This year IEW will be celebrated from November 17-21, 2003. Included in the commemorations at Rice are a special visit from the wife of the late Senator Fulbright, who created

Fulbright scholarships and exchanges throughout the world, in a effort to enhance the USA through international education. Her luncheon address will be hosted by the Office of the President and co-supported by the Office of International Students & Scholars for international leaders in the community. Another activity will be a luncheon where the presidents of the international student clubs will discuss international student needs at Rice and in the USA with Rice administration.

During last year's International Education Week, the OISS co-sponsored a campus-wide celebration with the Office of Study Abroad honoring Rice

international students, scholars and US study abroad students. President Gillis was presented with a Proclamation from Houston's Mayor Brown in honor of Rice's International Education Week. Please come by to see it framed in the OISS. A copy is on page 5, where you can read about how YOU are honored. We were also enriched by the addresses of Houston Mayor Pro-Tem Gordon Quan and Dr. Mark Scheid of Rice's Office of the President.

This year IEW celebration also includes a traditional Thanksgiving dinner by a community volunteer and an orientation reunion party and volunteer appreciation.

SEVIS Update

(continued from pg. 1)

In Spring 2003, OISS took on the two-month task to convert all current students and scholars into SEVIS, so that Rice University would be fully compliant by the August 1 deadline. Each student and scholar was required to visit OISS to verify the accuracy of the information being submitted to SEVIS and to update any outdated information.

In order to manage all the compliance requirements mandated by SEVIS, Rice University purchased a database software that allows us to send multiple updates to SEVIS at once while also allowing OISS to receive updated information (such as biographical data, addresses, and program information) from the central campus information system that is maintained by the Registrar (for students) and by Human Resources (for scholars).

Important things for students and

scholars to remember:

- 1) Your status is your responsibility.
- 2) Inform OISS of intended changes **PRIOR to submitting them (dropping below hours, employment, etc.)**
- 3) All data submitted to SEVIS should be **current and accurate, so be sure to notify OISS and any other appropriate office of any changes to your SEVIS data.**

Most of the data submitted to SEVIS is printed on the I-20 (for F visas) or DS-2019 (for J visas). Other information that is sent to SEVIS includes extensions of stay, change of major/program level/employment, transfers, practical training/employment authorizations, reduced course load authorization, full-time or part-time status, semester term dates and student's registration for that semester, dependent's information, early graduation, name and address changes, unauthorized reduced course load, unauthorized work, failure to complete program, disciplinary action or criminal conviction, etc.

U.S. Embassy/Consulate Checklist

Check with the website of the consulate you will visit well before your visit for procedures, times, documents. <http://www.state.gov/>.

✓ If possible, call (or have a friend or relative in the country where you will be applying for an entry visa) to check for any procedural changes not posted on the website.

✓ Be prepared for unexpected temporary closings of US Embassies and Consulates, due to security needs and political unrest.

✓ Be prepared for a delay (long waits in some cases) in applying for a non-immigrant visa. There could be several reasons for this:

- Security checks (there are several kinds)

- New laws requiring personal interviews for all applicants

✓ Plan ahead about how you can continue your academic responsibilities in case of an unexpected delay in visa re-issuance.

✓ If necessary, ask for a response in writing as to why you were denied, or if you are delayed, how you can follow-up.

✓ Be aware that any travel outside the USA is subject to risk and scrutiny at the US Embassy/Consulate and at the port of entry.



Special Registration Reminders

Upon entry to the USA, the immigration port of entry officials interview various foreign visitors. If you are among this group (you were given a FIN number), or the group that participated in the special registration call-in program in fall and spring of 2002-2003, remember to check with the immigration website (www.immigration.gov) for:

- 1) Specific airports designated for travelling in and out of the USA,
- 2) Procedures for checking out when travelling outside of the USA,
- 3) Dates and procedures for annual and other updated check-ins with immigration,
- 4) The AR-11 has a special form for Special Registrants (see article below for AR-11 information)
- 5) Any other details that may pertain to you or your friends and family.

Important Address Information

Change of U.S. address is one of the most frequent changes that must be updated in SEVIS within a 10-day timeframe, so please follow these steps when you change your address (even for temporary address changes such as internships):

- 1) Complete a change of address form for local addresses and turn it into the Registrar's office (for students) or Human Resources (for scholars).

- 2) Go to www.immigration.gov (click on "Immigration Forms") to print out the AR-11 form, or visit OISS to obtain a copy. Complete it and mail it to the address listed on the form, but keep copy for your records and make a note of the date it was sent.

- 3) Once your record is updated in the Registrar or Human Resources, the OISS database will be updated with

(continued on pg. 4)

J Highlights

* J visa Research Scholars or Professors are able to stay in the USA under the J visa for only a three-year program. Only under extraordinary circumstances can this program be extended up until six months. However, the justification must go through a review at the Department of State for approval. Plan ahead!

* Due to the transfer to the SEVIS J program last spring, some procedures changed the way the program was set up technically. The Department of State has assured international educators that they are working on a list of technical adjustments and enhancements. If something does not appear correct on your SEVIS DS-2019, feel free to make an appointment to see Adria Baker or Lily Lam.

* The Department of State J-1 waiver online status verification system is being upgraded to contain more data fields and give more information about pending applications. Watch for those changes soon. Online verification can be obtained for J-1 waivers at <http://travel.state.gov/jvw.html>.

* ALL J visa holders are REQUIRED by law to hold a specified type of insurance in order to maintain their legal J status. Please note that two of the requirements, **1) Repatriation and 2) Medical evacuation**, are not included in the regular Rice insurance for students and employees. You must hold supplementary insurance for these requirements. Please come to the OISS to get information on this supplementary insurance, which is very inexpensive.

Immigration Agency Restructured

Under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the **former INS ceased to exist** on March 1, 2003. It was replaced by three agencies, with whom international students and scholars will need to interface:

1) Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) - This agency provides services for employment authorization, changes and extensions of status, and permanent residency/citizenship applications. Website: www.immigration.gov

2) Immigration and Customs and Enforcement (ICE) - This agency supervises the SEVIS student/scholar tracking system.

3) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) - This agency oversees the port of entries to the USA.

We are optimistic that in the long-run, this is a good thing. In the past the contradicting roles that the former INS had to play (i.e., enforcement vs. service) could have been an obstacle for efficiency. Through professional organizations, the OISS advisors are making every attempt to have open communication with all of these agencies.

EAD - Employment Authorization Filing for F-1s and J-2s

F-1s who apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) and J-2s who apply for work permission must file the I-765 with the CIS for the EAD (Employment Authorization Document).

The law states that the application can be filed no earlier than 120 (about 4 months) from the beginning date of employment. However, recently the applications 4-5 months for processing. The Texas Service Center (TSC) clarified that students can apply as early as possible, but it must be within the semester that they are going to graduate (or 120 days, whichever is earlier). Fortunately, the Houston CIS is issuing temporary EAD cards after 90 days after applying for the EAD.

Important notice: Once you have received the Notice of Action (receipt) for your OPT application. You may check the status of your application by entering the receipt number (SRC#) on line at <https://egov.immigration.gov/graphics/cris/jsp/s/index.jsp?textFlag=N>. For a while, the message will say that your application is in process, but it will change to "application approved" once it is adjudicated.

You are recommended to check it before awaiting the long lines at the Houston CIS for a temporary card. Since information on EAD processing is subject to change, you are recommended to stay tuned to the oiss-announce listserve and visit: www.immigration.gov often.

Address Information

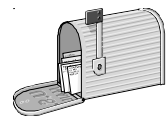
(continued from pg. 3)

the new current U.S. address information that will be automatically sent to SEVIS.

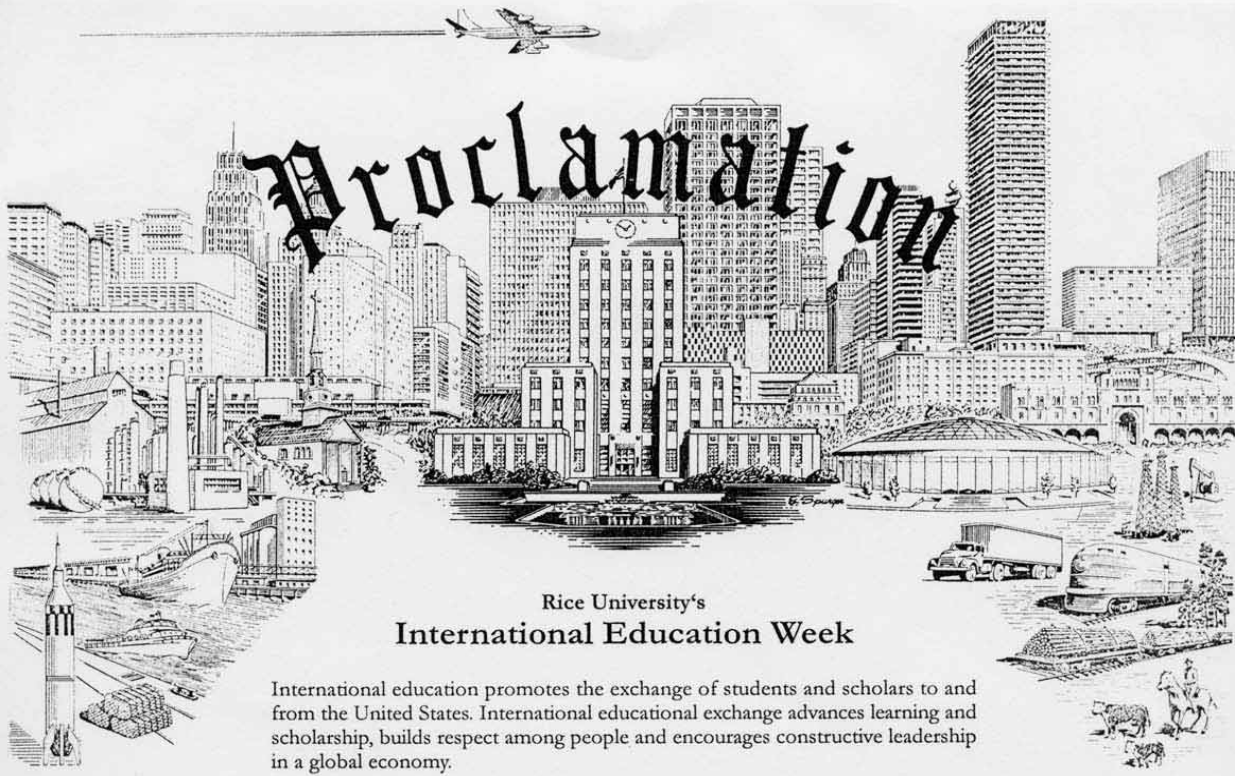
**** IMPORTANT:** Your U.S. address must be the physical location where you reside, it cannot be your department on campus or P.O. Box.

** For updates of foreign address, please visit the OISS directly.

Sandra Bloem,
SEVIS & Departmental Administrator



**CITY OF HOUSTON PRESENTS RICE UNIVERSITY'S PRESIDENT GILLIS A PROCLAMATION
HONORING RICE DURING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION WEEK (NOVEMBER 2002)**



**Rice University's
International Education Week**

International education promotes the exchange of students and scholars to and from the United States. International educational exchange advances learning and scholarship, builds respect among people and encourages constructive leadership in a global economy.

On November 18-22, 2002, Rice University will host an event to celebrate **International Education Week**. The event is an effort to recognize and honor Rice international students, scholars and study abroad students. It is also purposed to highlight Rice University's contributions to international education.

The City of Houston commends those committed to this worthwhile endeavor and urges all area residents to take part in activities and observances designed to highlight international education.

Therefore, I, Lee P. Brown, Mayor of the City of Houston, hereby proclaim November 18-22, 2002, as

**Rice University's
International Education Week**

in Houston, Texas.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Official Seal of the City of Houston to be affixed this 14th day of November, 2002, A.D.

Lee P. Brown
Mayor of the City of Houston



Airport Pick-up

A special **Thank-you** goes to all the volunteers for picking up new students from the airports. Many new students said that they were very happy to see you greet them after long hours of wait at the port of entry.

Thank you for extending your hospitality and helping newcomers. You are awesome!

Nahal Naficy and Somarine Diep

Orientation Wrap-up

Orientation week was a very memorable week for our new incoming students. The week started with the orientation program which was loaded with important information and activities.

While many were still struggling with jet lag, these two days could be very confusing and physically tiring. We appreciate the patience and positive attitude our new students have displayed. It was also a time for germination of new friendships, excitement of new discoveries of the American culture and many fun moments to recall. Other activities that our students enjoyed were the Graduate Welcome Dinner, Pot-Luck Dinner for the Friends of International Students, and our traditional visit to the IMAX Theater on Sunday.

Approximately 30 student volunteers put in much of their time to make this week as pleasurable as possible for our new students. We want to express our deep appreciation for their assistance in making this a wonderful orientation week for our new international students. We could not have accomplished so much for our new students without the contributions of our volunteer team.

Many thanks for you and I hope to work with you again next summer!

*Lily Lam, Associate Director
Office of International
Students & Scholars*

Rice International Student Association (RISA)

Dear Internationals,

We're here back at Rice with new people from all around the world. I hope y'all had good time during the summer. Another wonderful Rice year is ahead of us. Like last year we'll do lots of things since we have membership from several international clubs. We'll celebrate our special days, we'll see some movies, we'll go out for picnics, dinners etc. There're lots of things we did and we will do besides working everyday. RISA also will continue their coffee hours and more get together in the academic year. Please do participate, and more importantly take part in the clubs. Whatever you want as an event we can make it happen!

*Cafer, President of RISA
cafer@rice.edu*



Budget Tours for International Students

Want to get away and see some of the USA, but have limited funds? Consider travelling to visit one of the possible destinations but **PLAN NOW!** These activities are mostly funded and sponsored by church and community groups.

For more information on how to register, deadlines, what is included and not included in the cost, visit the website at: <http://www.ifmusa.org/tours>. The international student tours are organized by International Friendship Ministries.

Another great opportunity during the winter break to meet US and international students, experience Christmas holidays with a US family, and visit other US regions is with Christmas International House. Check out the great hospitality and possibilities at www.christmasih.org. The telephone number is: 404-228-7749.



New internationals and volunteers with OISS Staff during O-week



New students are shuttled to Texas Department of Public Safety for IDs

International Student Enrollment By Country/Region - Fall 2003

Albania	2	Guatemala	2	Poland	3
Algeria	1	Haiti	1	Portugal	1
Argentina	3	Hong Kong	7	Romania	13
Armenia	1	Iceland	1	Russia	12
Australia	8	India	96	Saudi Arabia	1
Austria	4	Indonesia	5	Senegal	3
Bangladesh	3	Iran	7	Singapore	8
Barbados	1	Israel	3	Slovakia	1
Belarus	3	Italy	7	South Africa	3
Belgium	1	Jamaica	7	Spain	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	4	Japan	10	Sri Lanka	2
Brazil	6	Kenya	1	Sweden	1
Bulgaria	7	Korea (South)	30	Switzerland	1
Burma	1	Kuwait	1	Taiwan	16
Canada	37	Lebanon	1	Tanzania	1
Chile	3	Mexico	33	Thailand	1
China	170	Morroco	1	Trinidad & Tobago	6
Colombia	4	Nepal	1	Turkey	25
Costa Rica	2	New Zealand	3	Ukraine	1
Cyprus	1	Nicaragua	1	United Arab Emirates	1
Czech Republic	1	Nigeria	1	United Kingdom	20
Dominican Republic	2	Pakistan	2	Uruguay	1
Egypt	4	Panama	1	Uzbekistan	1
El Salvador	4	Paraguay	1	Venezuela	9
France	5	Peru	5	Vietnam	3
Germany	16	Philippines	1	Yugoslavia	4
Greece	8			Zimbabwe	1

Totals:

Enrolled non-immigrant students: **676**
 Countries/Regions represented by students: **81**
 Graduate international students: **572**
 Undergraduate international students: **104**
 New international students for Fall 2003: **190**

Did you know?

... The international students make up approximately **14%** of the overall Rice population?
 ... We had **276** foreign visitors and scholars conducting research and lecturing at Rice during the pastyear?
 ... Rice international students and scholars represent **87** countries/regions?

TOTAL: 676

Calendar of Fall OISS Events

October 1, Wednesday - English Class sign-up, OISS lounge, 11:00 - 11:45 AM.

October 1, Wednesday - SIR luncheon (see page 8), OISS lounge, noon - 1:00PM.

October 2, Thursday/October 3, Friday - Practical Training Workshops on OPT and CPT; OISS Lounge, 3:00PM-4:00PM.

October 8, Wednesday - "Realistic Expectations in the Job Search for Internationals", Career Services/Louma Ghandour, OISS lounge, 4:00-5:00PM.

October ??, Saturday - IIE hosts family and friend picnic at typical Texan ranch (watch for details on OISS - announce).

October 21, Tuesday - Immigration Seminar on obtaining Permanent Residency and H-1B updates, Judy Lee, Immigration Lawyer, 4:00-5:30PM, Sewall Hall Room 301.

November 5, Wednesday - SIR luncheon, OISS lounge, noon - 1:00PM.

☐ **November 16-21. U.S. International Education Week includes:**

☐ **November 16, Sunday** - Typical

Thanksgiving Luncheon 1-3PM; OISS lounge. Hosted by a community volunteer wishing to share well-wishes and happy holidays to Rice internationals (ticket required for luncheon).

☐ **November 21, Friday** - Orientation Reunion and Volunteer Appreciation Party, OISS lounge, 3:00-4:30PM.

December 3, Wednesday - SIR luncheon OISS lounge, noon - 1:00PM.

Free English & Culture Classes Offered

OISS Sponsored and Volunteer-led Classes:

General Sign-up: October 1, 2003 from 11-45AM in the OISS Lounge

Beginning English Conversation Class - Martha Alexander

Thursdays: 12:00-1:00PM, Meyer Lounge, RMC. (First class - October 2)

Advanced/Intermediate English Conversation - Catherine Spain (veteran teacher for OISS for 9 years. Professional teacher at St. Johns in Houston).

Thursdays: 1:15-3:30 PM. (Meyer Lounge, RMC). (First class - October 2)

NOTE: Classes will be in different location on the following days:

10/2/2003; 10/16/2003 and 11/6/2003 Briar Lounge

10/30/2003 2nd Floor Conference Room, RMC

Idioms & Slang Class - Herb Craft (has been a host family and assisted many foreign nationals through the years with his international business).

Mondays: 12:00-1:00 PM OISS Lounge. (First class - October 6)



This bi-annual publication is designed specifically for the needs of Rice international students and scholars. Please take time to read it.



S.I.R. (Spouses of the Internationals at Rice began this semester in September. The following meetings for SIR are the first Wednesday of each month (October 1, November 5 and December 3). Please encourage your spouse or any women internationals (students, scholars and dependents) to come to these luncheon meetings For opportunity to relax and network.

If you like to know more about SIR, call the OISS x6095.

IMPORTANT REMINDER FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

- MAINTAINING IMMIGRATION STATUS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.
- NEVER work off-campus without current authorization from an OISS advisor or the CIS.
- Be a full-time student during the fall and spring semesters. Complete (not just register) for a full course load each main semesters: undergraduate students must complete 12 hours and graduate students 9 hours each spring and fall semester. Make an appointment to see an OISS advisor BEFORE dropping below full-time level, even if you are failing a class.
- Obtain a travel endorsement on your I-20 (or DS-2019) BEFORE leaving the U.S. if you plan to reenter the U.S. to resume your study. An I-20 is no longer valid for reentry once you complete the degree listed on your I-20, even if the I-20 has not expired.
- Maintain a passport valid at least 6 months into the future AT ALL TIMES.
- Do not let your I-20 (or DS-2019) expire. Apply for an extension of your I-20 or DS-2019 BEFORE the expiration date.
- Obtain an updated I-20 or DS-2019 WHENEVER you make a change in degree levels or majors.
- ONLY attend the school listed on your current SEVIS I-20 (or DS-2019).
- Keep the OISS informed of ALL changes in your passport, address, phone number or email within 10 days of the change. Report the address and phone changes to CIS with Form AR-11 "Alien's Change of Address Card." The form is available at www.immigration.gov and in the OISS. Also inform the Registrar's office of the change of your local address.

Subscribe to OISS Listserves

1) oiss-announce (very important): Immigration updates, workshops, free tickets, activities and opportunities for Rice international students & scholars.



international students & scholars.

2) oiss-market (recommended): Buy or sell any-

thing, send a message to: oiss-market@rice.edu

To subscribe, please follow these directions:

oiss-announce:

Write to listserv@rice.edu No subject. Message should say: subscribe oiss-announce

oiss-market:

Write to listserv@rice.edu No subject. Message should say: subscribe oiss-market

Graduate Loan Closet: A Help for Many. Could You Help?

For many years the Graduate Loan Closet has helped many, many graduate students through furnishing household items, furniture, and other necessities for apartment living. Internationals students have benefitted most, since it is impossible to bring most items from abroad.

The Loan Closet is sponsored by the Faculty Women's Club, and run due to the dedication of Mrs. Mary Lou Margrave, with help from Mrs. Jonel Curl.

She labors countless hours and donates personal financial backing behind the scenes through collecting items, administering the Loan Closet, advertising, reconciling deposits, counseling students, etc.

To keep the Loan Closet running, Mrs. Margrave has asked the following:

- 1) If you could volunteer a couple of hours a month,
- 2) Chinese translators

When you see Mrs. Margrave, please express your appreciation for her "Labor of Love". The Loan Closet is located in the Graduate Apartments. Call 713-667-9887 for monthly Loan Closet hours.